

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 AGR-10 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00

EB-07 FRB-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-15 TRSE-00 XMB-04

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R 041707Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9254

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USMISSION BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION GENEVA

UNCLAS ROME 12655

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, IT

SUBJECT: DROUGHT SITUATION MUCH IMPROVED IN ITALY

SECSTATE PASS AGRICULTURE

1. EXTENSIVE AND PERSISTENT RAINS AT END OF JULY AND EARLY  
IN AUGUST DRASTICALLY CHANGED SITUATION IN NORTHERN ITALY WHICH  
HAD UNUSUALLY DRY CONDITIONS PREVIOUS THREE MONTHS. TEMPERATURES  
ALSO FELL. IN ADDITION TO DIRECT IMMEDIATE HELP TO CROPS PO  
RIVER WATER LEVEL HAS BEEN ENHANCED BY SOME 4 FT. IN KEY AREAS  
THUS ELIMINATING RISK THAT PUMPING STATIONS WOULD BE AT TOO HIGH  
A LEVEL TO BE ABLE TO DRAW WATER. THEREFORE WATER WILL BE  
AVAILABLE DURING THE NEXT FEW CRUCIAL WEEKS.

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2. PREVIOUS FEARS DRAMATIC EFFECTS DROUGHT ON AGRICULTURE

AND ESPECIALLY LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION THIS YEAR NOW SEEM UNWARRANTED. FORAGE CROPS WERE BADLY AFFECTED IN MOST AREAS OF THE PO VALLEY WITH SECOND CUT POOR AND THIRD CUT IN MOST CASES COMPLETELY LOST. CATTLE BREEDERS WILL SUFFER MOST AS FORAGE OFF BY MORE THAN 3 MILLION METRIC TONS. CATTLEMEN ARE MAXIMIZING USE FEED SUBSTITUTES SUCH AS CEREAL BRANS, MARKET FOR WHICH HAVE REACTED UPWARD. MORE SUGARBEET TOPS AND MARGINAL PASTURE IN SEMI ABANDONED HILLY AREAS WILL BE USED. LARGE SCALE SLAUGHTERING CATTLE NOT EXPECTED.

3. CORN CROP SOMEWHAT DROUGHT AFFECTED. OUTPUT NOW PROJECTED AT 5.1 MILLION METRIC TONS, 4 0/0 LESS THAN LAST YEAR DESPITE 2 0/0 INCREASED ACREAGE.

4. AS DAIRY FARMERS WILL NEED UTILIZE MORE CONCENTRATE FEED, REDUCED CORN SUPPLY IMPLIES LARGER ITALIAN IMPORT REQUIREMENTS. RICE AND SUGARBEET APPARENTLY NOT AFFECTED BY DROUGHT. SOME FRUITS HURT. FRUIT SIZES WILL BE SMALLER AND KEEPING QUALITY IN COLD STORAGE FOR APPLES AND PEARS MAY SUFFER.

5. MINISTER MARCORA RECONFIRMED AS HEAD MINAG IN NEW GOVERNMENT. IN THE PAST HAD PROMISED TO INTERVENE IN FAVOUR FARMERS IN DROUGHT STRIKEN AREAS ESPECIALLY BY SUPPLYING FEED AT DISCOUNTED PRICES. PROCEDURES NOT YET SET. A SECOND POSSIBILITY IS DESIGNATION SOME AREAS AS "DISTRESSED" THUS ENTITLING THEM TO SOFT LOANS AND GRANTS.VOLPE

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